



# U.S. DEPARTMENT of STATE

## Canada

### Country Reports on Human Rights Practices - [2004](#)

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Canada is a constitutional monarchy with a federal parliamentary form of government. Citizens periodically choose their representatives in free and fair multiparty elections. Elections were held on June 28, and the ruling Liberal Party, under Prime Minister Paul Martin, retained power, albeit in a minority government. The judiciary is independent.

Federal, provincial, and municipal police forces have responsibility for law enforcement and maintenance of order. The newly organized Department of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness is the cabinet ministry responsible for providing direction to the federal law enforcement and police agencies. The civilian authorities maintained effective control of the security forces. There were no reports that security forces committed human rights abuses.

The country has a highly developed, market-based economy and a population of approximately 32.5 million. Real gross domestic product growth was estimated at 3.3 percent in 2003, and wages and benefits generally kept pace with inflation.

The Government generally respected the human rights of its citizens, and the law and judiciary provide effective means of addressing individual instances of abuse. However, there were problems in some areas, including sporadic incidents of excessive force by police, increased reports of anti-Semitic acts, and trafficking in persons. Incidents of violence against women declined during the year.

#### RESPECT FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

##### Section 1 Respect for the Integrity of the Person, Including Freedom From:

###### a. Arbitrary or Unlawful Deprivation of Life

There were no reports of the arbitrary or unlawful deprivation of life committed by the Government or its agents.

The media reported on several cases involving individuals who died after police used Taser guns while making the arrest. Although media reports initially speculated that Taser guns caused these deaths, subsequent reporting indicated that the cause of death in each of these cases was from drug overdoses, and police authorities were cleared of any wrongdoing.

On January 23, a youth, in the custody of two court guards, died after he fell down a courthouse elevator shaft. A police spokesman stated the elevator car was not in place when the doors opened and the handcuffed boy stepped into the shaft, a claim the elevator manufacturer disputed. On July 21, police announced there was insufficient evidence to proceed with charges against the guards.

On September 30, a member of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) was convicted of manslaughter for the 1999 killing of a prisoner that he had earlier arrested.

###### b. Disappearance

There were no reports of politically motivated disappearances.

###### c. Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman, or Degrading Treatment or Punishment

The law prohibits such practices, and the Government generally observed these prohibitions in practice; however, there were isolated incidents of police mistreating suspects.

During the year, police in Edmonton were accused of using excessive force when responding to minor infractions in the city's

tourist district. Among other incidents, police allegedly knocked a man to the ground for jaywalking; repeatedly kicked a person for swearing at officers; and repeatedly hit a handcuffed person in the face.

On September 24, an inquiry concluded that the Saskatoon Police had conducted an inadequate investigation into the circumstances of the death of an aboriginal teenager who was found frozen on the outskirts of Saskatoon in 1990. In November, the Saskatoon Police fired the two police officers who were involved in the case.

In January, six Vancouver police officers who pleaded guilty in November 2003 to common assault were sentenced: Two officers were fired and given house arrest sentences of 60 and 30 days, two officers were given suspended sentences, and the charges against the remaining two officers were dropped.

Prison conditions generally met international standards, and the Government permitted visits by independent human rights observers. Unlike in 2003, there were no reports of riots at prisons within the country.

Prisons, both at the federal and local level, generally held men and women separately. In addition, juveniles were not incarcerated with adults, and pre-trial detainees were held separately from convicted prisoners.

In January, the Canadian Human Rights Commission found that systemic flaws routinely eroded the human rights of women in prison and made 19 recommendations on how to fix discrimination on the basis of sex, race, and disability. Complaints from human rights activists focused on several problems: Women who were assigned to maximum security prisons often had mental health problems, did not have access to the services they needed, and often were segregated for months.

#### d. Arbitrary Arrest or Detention

The law prohibits arbitrary arrest and detention, and the Government generally observed these prohibitions.

The RCMP is a national, federal, provincial, and municipal policing body. It provides complete federal policing service throughout the country and also provides policing services under contract to the 3 territories, 8 provinces (Quebec and Ontario have their own provincial police), and approximately 198 municipalities.

A judge may issue a warrant after being satisfied that a criminal offense may have been committed. A person arrested for a criminal offense has the right to remain silent, to be informed as to the reason for the arrest, to engage a lawyer, and to have prompt access to family members. Bail generally was available.

In December, a federal appeals court ruled that it is constitutional for the Government to imprison, without public trial, any non-citizen who poses a security threat. Cases are presented in secret to two cabinet ministers by intelligence or police agencies and then reviewed by a federal judge. The evidence is not shown to the detained individual. If the judge approves the ministers' recommendation, the individual may be imprisoned indefinitely, pending deportation proceedings. Since 1991, this procedure has been used 27 times. At year's end, pursuant to this procedure, six individuals were incarcerated awaiting deportation.

#### e. Denial of Fair Public Trial

The law provides for an independent judiciary, and the Government generally respected this provision in practice. The law provides for the right to a fair trial, and an independent judiciary generally enforced this right.

The court system is divided into federal and provincial courts, which handle both civil and criminal matters. The highest federal court is the Supreme Court, which exercises general appellate jurisdiction and advises on constitutional matters.

The judicial system is based on English common law at the federal level as well as in most provinces; in Quebec Province, it is derived from the Napoleonic Code. Throughout the country, judges are appointed. In criminal trials, the law provides for a presumption of innocence and the right to a public trial, to counsel (which is free for indigents), and to appeal. The prosecution also may appeal in certain limited circumstances.

Under the provisions of Ontario Province's 1991 Arbitration Act, the Islamic Institute of Civil Justice gained the right in 2003 to hold tribunals in which marriage, family, and business disputes can be settled according to Shari'a law. The tribunals are voluntary, and decisions must comply with the Charter of Rights and can be appealed to the court system.

There were no reports of political prisoners.

#### f. Arbitrary Interference with Privacy, Family, Home, or Correspondence

The law prohibits such practices, and the Government generally respected these prohibitions in practice.

In June, the Supreme Court issued two rulings in response to several court challenges to the 2001 antiterrorism Security of Information Act that expanded police investigative and wiretapping powers. The Court ruled that witnesses must answer questions in special investigative hearings, while limiting the Government's ability to cloak these procedures in secrecy.

## Section 2 Respect for Civil Liberties, Including:

### a. Freedom of Speech and Press

The law provides for freedom of speech and of the press, and the Government generally respected these rights in practice and did not restrict academic freedom. An independent press, an effective judiciary, and a functioning democratic political system combined to ensure freedom of speech and the press. The independent media were active and expressed a wide variety of views without restriction.

The Supreme Court has ruled that the Government may limit free speech in the name of goals such as ending discrimination, ensuring social harmony, or promoting gender equality. The Court ruled that the benefits of limiting hate speech and promoting equality are sufficient to outweigh the freedom of speech clause in the Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

Inciting hatred (in certain cases) or genocide is a criminal offense, but the Supreme Court has set a high threshold for such cases, specifying that these acts must be proven to be willful and public. The Broadcasting Act prohibits programming containing any abusive comment that would expose individuals or groups to hatred or contempt. Provincial-level film censorship, broadcast licensing procedures, broadcasters' voluntary codes curbing graphic violence, and laws against hate literature and pornography also imposed some restrictions on the media.

The Human Rights Act prohibits repeated telephone communications that expose a person or group to hatred or contempt.

On January 21, police officers searched the home of an Ottawa newspaper reporter and the offices of the newspaper itself in search of documents related to a Syrian-born Canadian citizen arrested abroad as a suspected terrorist. The reporter faced possible criminal charges under the anti-terrorism Security of Information Act. Although a court authorized the search, some members of the media and human rights groups raised concerns that it infringed on the Charter of Rights, which guarantees the freedom of the press.

On August 26, the Canadian Radio-Television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC) agreed to allow a Quebec City radio station to continue broadcasting, pending a court decision on whether the station can renew its license to broadcast. Since 1996, the general public has filed numerous complaints with the CRTC, alleging that announcers on the station used offensive comments, personal attacks, and harassment as part of their programming. The station portrayed the CRTC action as an attempt to curb the station's freedom of expression. The case prompted extensive media coverage in Quebec Province, and there were public demonstrations in support of the radio station in Quebec City and Ottawa.

The Government did not restrict access to the Internet.

### b. Freedom of Peaceful Assembly and Association

The law provides for freedom of assembly and association, and the Government generally respected these rights in practice.

### c. Freedom of Religion

The law provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respected this right in practice.

There is no official state religion, and religious groups are not required to register with the Government. Public funding for Roman Catholic schools is constitutionally protected in the country's original four provinces.

In March, the Quebec Human Rights Commission ruled that a private school could not expel a Muslim student for wearing a hijab (head scarf) after a September 2003 incident in which a 16-year-old girl refused to remove her hijab. In August, the Government issued a statement assuring Muslims that their religious right to wear a hijab would be respected and protected when photographs are taken for the Canadian Permanent Resident card. The statement responded to complaints made by Muslim women who were told to remove their hijab at the Pierre Trudeau International Airport in Montreal.

There were a number of reports of harassment of religious minorities.

In the first 8 months of the year, the League for Human Rights of B'nai Brith received nearly 600 reports of anti-Semitism, compared with 584 such reports in all of 2003. Incidents included harassment (66 percent of incidents), vandalism of property (31 percent), and violence (3 percent). For example: On April 4, the library of a Jewish elementary school in Montreal was firebombed; the perpetrator was awaiting sentencing at year's end. On June 2, vandals overturned 20 gravestones in the Beth Israel Cemetery in Quebec City. In December, the major windows of a synagogue in the Greater Toronto area were smashed.

All levels of government reacted strongly to the incidents.

There were 17 incidents of harassment of Muslim institutions and mosques, according to the Council of American-Islamic Relations Canada. The Government urged the population to refrain from prejudice against Muslims or other persons on the basis of their religious beliefs, ethnic heritage, or cultural differences. Police forces investigated and discouraged anti-Muslim actions.

For a more detailed discussion, see the [2004 International Religious Freedom Report](#).

#### d. Freedom of Movement within the Country, Foreign Travel, Emigration, and Repatriation

The law provides for these rights, and the Government generally respected them in practice.

The law prohibits forced exile, and the Government did not use it.

The law provides for the granting of asylum or refugee status in accordance with the 1951 U.N. Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees or its 1967 Protocol, and the Government has established a system for providing protection to refugees. In practice, the Government provided protection against refoulement, the return of persons to a country where they feared persecution. The Government granted refugee status or asylum. The Government cooperated with the office of the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees and other humanitarian organizations in assisting refugees and asylum seekers. The Government also provided temporary protection to individuals who may not qualify as refugees under the 1951 Convention/1967 Protocol. The Government offered resettlement, and, at year's end, 27,290 refugee and asylum cases were pending.

On March 16, the Government announced changes to the appointment process to the Immigration and Refugee Board (IRB) to eliminate political patronage, strengthen the criteria for appointment to the IRB, and increase parliamentary review. This action responded to public criticism that the acceptance rate of refugee claims varied widely between individuals members of the IRB and that some IRB members were unqualified to decide refugee claims.

In 2002, the Supreme Court ruled that refugees facing torture in their home countries generally cannot be deported there, unless evidence shows that their continued presence poses a serious threat to national security. On March 4, the Office of the Public Safety Minister, reversing an IRB decision, ruled that a North Korean defector could remain in the country, reasoning that the individual would likely be tortured or killed if deported to North Korea.

The case of a Sri Lankan suspected of being a fundraiser for the Tamil Tigers, who claimed that he would be tortured upon return to Sri Lanka, remained pending after he appealed his deportation order to a Federal court in May.

A safe country of transit agreement to return asylum applicants previously resident in the United States to that country for adjudication came into force on December 29.

#### Section 3 Respect for Political Rights: The Right of Citizens to Change Their Government

The law provides citizens with the right to change their government peacefully, and citizens exercised this right in practice through periodic, free, and fair elections held on the basis of universal suffrage.

On June 28, a general election was held, and the ruling Liberal Party maintained control of Parliament for the fourth consecutive election; however, the party did not win a majority of seats, and the country will have its first minority Government since 1979. The Liberal Party won 135 seats, the Conservative Party 99 seats, the Bloc Quebecois 54 seats, the New Democratic Party 19 seats, and Independent (non-party affiliated) 1 seat.

Corruption in government was not considered a significant problem, as reflected in an independent assessment prepared by Transparency International. In February, a report by the Auditor General revealed that up to \$80 million (Cdn 100 million) of the \$200 million (Cdn 250 million) authorized for government advertising in Quebec from 1996 to 2001 was allocated to advertising firms that were allies of the Quebec branch of the ruling Liberal Party. The case prompted extensive media coverage throughout the country and tarnished the reputation of the Government. A government investigation continued at year's end.

The Government has an access to information law that permits public access to government information by citizens and non-citizens, including foreign media. In January, the Government announced initiatives to improve transparency in government that included releasing on a quarterly basis the public expenditures of senior government officials.

No laws limit the participation of women or minorities in political life. There were 65 women and 5 aboriginal (Inuit, North American Indian, or Metis) members in the 308-member House of Commons. There were 33 women and 5 aboriginal members in the 93-seat Senate (whose members are appointed by the Government, and not elected). Women held 8 seats in the 39-person Cabinet. The Governor General and four of the nine members of the Supreme Court, including the Chief Justice, were women.

#### Section 4 Governmental Attitude Regarding International and Nongovernmental Investigation of Alleged Violations of Human Rights

A wide variety of domestic and international human rights groups generally operated without government restriction, investigating and publishing their findings on human rights cases. Government officials were very cooperative and responsive to their views.

#### Section 5 Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in Persons

The law provides for equal benefits and protection of the law regardless of race, national or ethnic origin, color, sex, age, or mental or physical disability; these rights generally were respected in practice.

##### Women

The law prohibits violence against women, including spousal abuse; however, it remained a concern. Statistics Canada reported that there were 74.1 sexual assaults per 100,000 population in 2003, down from 78.1 in 2002. The direct medical costs of violence against women were estimated at \$1.2 billion (Cdn \$1.5 billion).

The courts consider sexual abuse cases seriously, and those convicted face up to 10 years in prison. Sexual assaults involving weapons, threats, wounding, or endangerment of life carry longer sentences, up to life imprisonment.

There were more than 500 shelters for abused women, providing both emergency care and long-term assistance. The Government has a Family Violence initiative that involves 12 departments, and a cabinet ministry, Status of Women Canada, that was charged with eliminating systemic violence against women and advancing women's human rights.

In October, Amnesty International issued a report that charged that the Government failed to provide aboriginal women with adequate protection. The report stated that more than 500 aboriginal women had disappeared over the past 20 years, and the precarious social and economic status of aboriginal women pushed them into dangerous situations including poverty, homelessness, and prostitution.

Prostitution is legal, but pimping (benefiting from the earnings of prostitution of another) and operating, being found in, or working in a brothel are not.

Women were trafficked for purposes of sexual exploitation (see Section 5, Trafficking).

The Criminal Code prohibits criminal harassment (stalking) and makes it punishable by imprisonment for up to 5 years. The law prohibits sexual harassment, and the Government generally enforced this provision. Women continued to complain of sexual abuse, harassment, and discrimination in the armed forces, and the Government established mechanisms to resolve complaints. An independent armed forces grievance board addressed such complaints.

Women were well represented in the labor force, including business and the professions. Employment equity laws and regulations cover federal employees in all but the security and defense services. Women have marriage and property rights equal to those of men.

##### Children

The Government demonstrated its strong commitment to children's rights and welfare through its well-funded systems of public education and medical care. Education is free through grade 13 and is compulsory nationwide through age 15 or 16, depending on the province. UNICEF reported that 100 percent of elementary-age children attended school, and most children graduated from high school. Federal and provincial regulations protect children from abuse, overwork, and discrimination and penalize perpetrators of such offenses.

There was no societal pattern of abuse of children. Cases of past institutional abuses of children (mostly orphans and aboriginal children) in residential homes remained the subject of continuing class action litigation and settlements. Approximately 1,000 cases have been settled; however, an estimated 12,000 remained outstanding.

Children were trafficked for purposes of sexual exploitation (see Section 5, Trafficking).

##### Trafficking in Persons

The law prohibits trafficking in persons; however, trafficking remained a problem. The law establishes criminal penalties of up to life in prison and fines of up to \$800,000 (Cdn \$1 million) for convicted traffickers; however, no prosecutions have yet resulted from the legislation. On February 11, a Montreal court sentenced a man charged in 2002 (prior to passage of the new law) of

being part of a prostitution ring, which involved girls as young as 14, to 3½ years in jail.

The Government has an interdepartmental working group, consisting of 17 departments and agencies and co-chaired by senior officials from the ministries of Justice and Foreign Affairs, to combat trafficking in persons. The RCMP was establishing a task force to investigate offenses related to trafficking in persons.

On December 15, the Government revised immigration regulations that permitted the adult entertainment industry to utilize a blanket authorization to recruit foreign women to enter the country on temporary work visas to be employed as exotic dancers. Requests must now be considered individually. The Government acknowledged the possibility that some women hired under the earlier rules may have been suborned into the sex trade.

The country was a destination and a transit point to the United States for women, children, and men trafficked for purposes of sexual exploitation, labor, and the drug trade. In February, the RCMP conservatively estimated that annually 800 persons were trafficked into the country and 1,500 to 2,200 persons were trafficked into the United States.

Thousands of persons entered the country illegally over the last decade. These persons came primarily from East Asia (particularly China and Korea, but also Malaysia), Central and South Asia, Eastern Europe, Russia, Latin America and the Caribbean (including Mexico, Honduras, and Haiti), and South Africa. Many of these illegal immigrants paid large sums to be smuggled to the country, were indentured to their traffickers upon arrival, worked at lower than minimum wage, and used most of their salaries to pay down their debt at usurious interest rates. The traffickers used violence to ensure that their clients paid and that they did not inform the police. Asian women and girls who were smuggled into the country often were forced into prostitution. Traffickers used intimidation and violence, as well as the illegal immigrants' inability to speak English, to keep victims from running away or informing the police.

Vancouver and Toronto served as hubs for organized crime groups that traffic in persons, including trafficking for prostitution. East Asian crime groups targeted the country, Vancouver in particular, exploiting immigration laws, benefits available to immigrants, and the proximity to the U.S. border. Police stated that the number of South Koreans involved in smuggling or trafficking activity had "grown exponentially" since the country removed its visa requirement for South Korea in 1994. On February 22, police and border officials arrested 10 South Koreans trying to cross the border into Montana; the individuals, who were apparently trafficking victims, had entered the country in Vancouver.

Although the Government does not specifically provide funding for trafficking victims, such victims could access a number of programs and services, ranging from health care to legal assistance. Victims of trafficking also were eligible to apply for assistance from victims' assistance funds maintained by the provincial governments. Trafficking victims may apply for permanent residence under the "humanitarian and compassionate" provisions of the Immigration Act; however, some victims of trafficking were arrested and deported.

The Government's Interdepartmental Working Group on Trafficking in Persons trained officials to increase awareness about trafficking. The Group also produced and distributed an anti-trafficking pamphlet to the country's diplomatic missions and to nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) with access to potential victims in source countries. In addition, the Government supported efforts by NGOs and community organizations to raise awareness of trafficking and funded academic studies of the problem.

#### Persons with Disabilities

There was no legal discrimination against persons with disabilities in employment, education, access to health care, or in the provision of other state services. Sexual exploitation of persons with disabilities in situations of dependency is a criminal offense. The law mandates access to buildings for persons with disabilities, and the Government generally enforced these provisions in practice.

Persons with disabilities were underrepresented in the workforce.

#### National/Racial/Ethnic Minorities

The Charter of Rights and Freedoms protects the linguistic and cultural rights of minorities and established English and French as the country's two official languages. Despite the federal policy of bilingualism, English speakers in Quebec and French speakers in other parts of the country generally lived and worked in the language of the majority. The provinces may grant French or English the status of an official language. Only New Brunswick has granted the two languages equal status. The Charter of the French Language in Quebec makes French the official language of the province and requires the use of French in commerce, the workplace, education, and government. Minority language rights are secured by law in Quebec's Charter of the French Language.

The English-speaking minority of Quebec, representing 9 percent of the population of the province and 16 percent of the population of the city of Montreal, continued to protest restrictions placed on English-language use. English speakers also expressed concern over health services and public schooling in their language.

The Charter of the French Language restricts access to publicly funded English education only to those students who did most of their elementary or secondary studies in English in the country. The law also limits English language education to those students with a brother or a sister who did most of their elementary or secondary studies in English in the country or in cases in which the father or the mother did most of his or her studies in English in the country.

Provinces other than Quebec often lacked adequate French-language schooling and health services.

### Indigenous People

The law recognizes three different groups of aboriginals: Indians (generally called First Nations), Inuit (formerly called Eskimos), and Metis (persons of mixed Indian-European ancestry). A September 2003 Supreme Court decision gave the Metis the same hunting rights as other aboriginal groups and marked the first time that Metis rights had been constitutionally defined. Aboriginals constituted approximately 2.8 percent of the national population and higher percentages in the country's three territories: Yukon, 20 percent; Northwest Territories, 62 percent; and Nunavut, 84 percent. Disputes over land claims, self-government, treaty rights, taxation, duty-free imports, fishing and hunting rights, and alleged harassment by police continued to be sources of tension on some reserves. Aboriginals remained underrepresented in the work force, overrepresented on welfare rolls and in prison populations, and more susceptible to suicide and poverty than other population groups.

The Constitution recognizes aboriginal rights, and the law specifically protects such rights, including those established by historical land claims settlements. Historical treaties with aboriginal groups in the eastern part of the country form the basis for the Government's policies there, but there were legal challenges to the Government's interpretation of treaty rights. Aboriginal groups in the west that never signed historical treaties continued to claim land and resources, and many continued to seek legal resolution of outstanding issues. As a result, the evolution of the Government's policy toward aboriginal rights, particularly land claims, has been linked closely to legal challenges, including 45 Supreme Court decisions.

On April 19, the Government announced a series of steps designed to strengthen the relationship with the aboriginal leadership, including the creation of a report card to measure progress in key socioeconomic areas. On September 13, the Government undertook to provide \$560 million (Cdn \$700 million) to encourage greater aboriginal participation in the health professions, to address chronic diseases such as diabetes, and to create an Aboriginal Health Transition Fund to adapt existing health care services to aboriginal needs.

The Government continued the process of claim settlements. The Government also continued self-government negotiations with more than 350 First Nations.

In July, the Supreme Court announced that it would hear a case on the question of whether the Government violated aboriginal treaty rights in authorizing a road through the country's largest national park. The case, which was pending at year's end, raised the issue of whether treaty rights negotiated with aboriginal groups by the Government take precedent over environmental law and the regulatory power of the Government to manage a national park.

A 2002 case brought by the Gitanyow, an indigenous group located near the Nisga'a people in northwestern British Columbia, who contended that a 2000 treaty awarded more than 85 percent of their traditional tribal lands to the Nisga'a, remained pending in the courts. However, the Gitanyow were negotiating their own treaty settlement and agreed not to pursue litigation while negotiations continued.

### Section 6 Worker Rights

#### a. The Right of Association

The law allows workers in both the public (except armed forces and police) and the private sectors to form and join unions of their choice without previous authorization, and workers did so in practice.

Trade unions are independent of the Government. Approximately, 29.5 percent of the civilian labor force was unionized.

#### b. The Right to Organize and Bargain Collectively

All workers, except for those in the public sector who provide essential services, have the right to strike, and workers exercised this right in practice. The law prohibits employer retribution against strikers and union leaders, and the Government generally enforced this provision in practice. There are no export processing zones.

Labor action, including strikes, occurred throughout the country during the year, including strikes against the Government by approximately 120,000 federal employees.

#### c. Prohibition of Forced or Compulsory Labor

The law prohibits forced or compulsory labor, including by children; however, there were reports that such practices occurred (see Section 5).

d. Prohibition of Child Labor and Minimum Age for Employment

Child labor legislation varies from province to province. The Government does not employ youths under 17 years of age while school is in session. Most provinces prohibited children under age 15 or 16 from working without parental consent, at night, or in any hazardous employment. Inspections conducted by the federal and provincial labor ministries enforced these prohibitions effectively.

e. Acceptable Conditions of Work

Each province and territory set minimum wage rates, which ranged from \$4.72 to \$6.40 (Cdn \$5.90 to Cdn \$8.00) per hour. Ontario and Alberta have a minimum wage rate for youths lower than their respective minimums for adult workers. The minimum wage did not provide a decent standard of living for a worker and family, and a family whose only employed member earns the minimum wage would fall below the poverty line.

Standard work hours vary from province to province, but in all provinces the limit is 40 or 48 hours per week, with at least 24 hours of rest. The law requires payment of a premium for work above the standard workweek.

Federal law provides safety and health standards for employees under federal jurisdiction, while provincial and territorial legislation provides for all other employees. Federal and provincial labor departments monitored and enforced these standards. Federal, provincial, and territorial laws protect the right of workers with "reasonable cause" to refuse dangerous work and to remove themselves from hazardous work conditions.